The Bulletins are published weekly throughout the school year (thirty issues) to aid teachers and students in keeping abreast of geography behind current news events.

GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS

of

The National Geographic Society

WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

The National Geographic Society is a non-profit educational and scientific Society established for the increase of geographic knowledge and its popular diffusion.

VOLUME XXIX — May 7, 1951 — NUMBER 29

1. "Little Iron Curtain" Divides Diomede Isles — Gray
2. Valley Forge Mixes Beauty with History — Hoopes - Gray
3. French Guiana Is No Longer a Penal Colony — Matthews
4. UN Studies Road-Sign Standardization — Matthews
5. Bekonscot, England, Is a World in Miniature — Hoopes - Atwater

AUDREY AND FRANK MORGAN

MOTHER AND CHILDREN MAKE A HAPPY OCCASION OF FISHING THROUGH A HOLE IN THE ICE

A handy and immense deep-freeze locker—the Bering Sea—surrounds their home on Little Diomede Island (Bulletin No. 1). Girls' calico coverings keep furs clean. Baby is cupped in mother's parka.

Bulletin No. 1, May 7, 1951

"Little Iron Curtain" Divides Diomede Isles

ALMOST on the Arctic Circle, 55 miles of icy, fog-ridden water separate Alaska from Siberia's easternmost point. This is Bering Strait. Halfway across, two rocky islands jut from the water like steppingstones. These are the Diomede Islands, Big and Little (map, next page).

Big Diomede belongs to the Soviet Union; Little Diomede is part of Alaska and thus a United States outpost. The three-mile channel that divides the islands also divides Russia and America, East and West. Normally the Eskimos of the Diomedes mingle freely, but since 1948 the Soviets have maintained a "little Iron Curtain" between the two.

Wonder about Relatives Across Channel

In the summer of 1948, Russian soldiers suddenly imprisoned 18 Little Diomede traders who happened to be on Big Diomede. Held for 52 days, the American citizens were fed only black bread and watery soup while being questioned about Alaskan defenses. When released, they were near starvation.

Now the Eskimos of Little Diomede avoid the larger island and can only wonder what is happening to their friends and relatives across the channel—a situation similar to that in central Europe where the Iron Curtain cuts through national and sometimes family lines.

Otherwise life on Little Diomede goes on much as it has for centuries. The bare two-mile-long oval rock, rising sharply 1,000 feet from the water, supports one village—as it has done for 2,000 years. The sea yields the villagers' livelihood. Seals give them food in the form of blubber, skins for clothing and boatbuilding, and fuel oil.

Women and men cut holes in the ice and fish (illustration, cover). Men go out together to bring in huge walruses. Quick-witted netmen snare crested auklets as they fly low over the rocks.

Sunday on One Isle; Monday on Other

Most of the villagers live in wooden houses clinging to a vast rocky slope. Umiaks, dogs, oil drums, and racks of drying meat and hides are marks of the typical Eskimo village. Families crowd together in small quarters for warmth and because of their friendly natures. A chunk of blubber stuck in baby's mouth keeps him happy.

The International Date Line runs between the two Diomedes; so when it is Sunday on the American isle it is Monday on the Russian.

Vitus Bering, a Dane sailing for Russia, discovered the islands on St. Diomede's Day (August 16), 1728. Russia owned both islands until 1867 when it sold Little Diomede along with the rest of Alaska to the United States.

The Diomede Eskimos are probably descendants of those who stayed behind during the migrations that carried their race from Asia across Bering Strait into America. During that movement, presumably about

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER APRIL 27, 1943, POST OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C., UNDER ACT OF MARCH 3, 1879.
COPYRIGHT, 1951, BY THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY. INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT SECURED. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
SUBSCRIPTION TWENTY-FIVE CENTS FOR THIRTY WEEKLY ISSUES DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR. IN CANADA, FIFTY CENTS.

UMI

E. M. NEWMAN FROM WIDE WORLD

MOTORISTS OF MANY TONGUES TRAVEL NETHERLANDS HIGHWAYS; HENCE, ROAD SIGNS CARRY PICTURES RATHER THAN WORDS (Bulletin No. 4)

The large sign says, in effect, look out for crossing wagons, carts, and cattle. The sign at the right indicates that the path is for bicycles. The Netherlands Cyclists Association erected the markers. Highway and bike path follow a dike top above the level of surrounding lands.

Bulletin No. 2, May 7, 1951

Valley Forge Mixes Beauty with History

AT THIS time of year, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, is a place of such beauty that it becomes hard to associate it with the pain and privation for which it is known to every school child. Some 50,000 dogwood trees now are spreading their deep-pink and ivory-white tribute along the slopes where George Washington's ragged patriots of 1777-78 left bloody footprints in the snow.

As an attraction of the mid-Atlantic states, the dogwood blossoms overshadow history—at least during the first half of May when they are normally at their height.

Dogwood Trail Gains Fame

The Pennsylvania state park, 20 miles northwest of Philadelphia, has lured more than 1,000,000 visitors annually in recent years. Often scouts (illustration, next page) and other special groups use parts of its 2,000 rolling acres for encampments. Last year 40,000 Boy Scouts of America pitched tents at Valley Forge for their National Jamboree and thus kept rendezvous with some of the nation's most historic dead.

But in early May the dogwoods capture the fields where the literally cold war waged for independence was fought 173 winters ago. Valley Forge State Park has its own nursery for this native Pennsylvania tree, which grew there in Washington's time. Accenting the spring show of its blossoms, garden clubs for many years have been planting "the Dogwood Trail." This extends for 40 miles along the highway from Valley Forge to New Hope on the Delaware River—the route taken by the Continental Army in June after breaking its Valley Forge camp.

Visitors come all summer when the rolling countryside is green, and through autumn with its vivid reds and golds. Many make it a point to visit in winter, the better to picture the months of hardship for which the site is famed.

In that bitter cold winter, some 3,000 of the 11,089 men died of cold, privation, and disease—17 for each day of the six-months encampment. Active military operations were suspended, but the winter camp by the Schuylkill River exerted a positive effect. It kept the enemy, quartered in temporary triumph in Philadelphia homes, from foraging at will over the Pennsylvania countryside. It kept the fight for freedom very much alive.

Landmarks Preserved

Despite suffering and death, the first daily drills of any United States armed forces began in February, 1778, under Baron Frederick von Steuben. Spring brought the great news that France was an ally, and General Washington's force went forth as a more efficient fighting outfit to change the tide of the war.

Of interest at Valley Forge today are Washington's headquarters and the reproductions of soldiers' huts scattered through the park. Fortifications and earthworks have been restored. Relics, including Washington's tent, flags, and crude copies of battle maps, tell a story in the museums in and near the park.

UMI

2,000 years ago, the Diomedes were truly steppingstones for the immigrants. In like manner the two islands no doubt witnessed the much earlier migrations of peoples who became America's Indians.

In 1936 the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution jointly sent an expedition to the Diomedes to study the remains of those earliest Americans.

NOTE: The Diomede Islands are shown on the National Geographic Society's maps of Canada, Alaska & Greenland, and The Top of the World. Write the Society's headquarters, Washington 6, D. C., for a price list of maps.

For further information, see "Alaska's Russian Frontier: Little Diomede," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for April, 1951; "Nomads of the Far North," October, 1949; "Strategic Alaska Looks Ahead," September, 1942; "Our Air Frontier in Alaska," October, 1940; and "Exploring Frozen Fragments of American History," May, 1939.

See also, in the GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS, March 12, 1951, "Schools Come to Farthest Eskimo Land."

BETWEEN THE MIDDLE KNUCKLE OF ALASKA'S FIST AND THE TIP OF SIBERIA'S NOSE STAND THE DIOMEDE ISLANDS

The larger of the two rocky islands belongs to the Soviet Union; Little Diomede is United States territory. The International Date Line runs between, making them 24 hours apart though divided by only three miles of water. Each isle supports one small village.

Bulletin No. 3, May 7, 1951

French Guiana Is No Longer a Penal Colony

SALVATION Army efforts to aid "the last 101 prisoners in French Guiana" disclose the virtual completion of a 13-year French program to wipe out all trace of one of the world's most infamous penal colonies—Devil's Island.

French law abolished "Devil's Island" sentences in 1938, but the war interrupted rehabilitation of French Guiana's condemned men, a task officially assigned to the French Salvation Army. Since 1946, however, more than 5,000 prisoners and poverty-stricken "libérés" have been taken home to France or to north Africa. Those few who are left have leprosy, are convicted of crimes in Guiana, or—even though free men—are too broken in mind or body to survive the change in climate.

"Isles of Health"

To care for them, hospitals and welfare units, farm centers and modern quarters have been built in the jungle-walled South American colony whose name for a century has been synonymous with hell upon earth.

Off the French Guiana coast are the three ironically named Iles du Salut (isles of health; illustration, next page), among them lonely Devil's Island itself. Here Captain Alfred Dreyfus paced the beach in martyr's exile in the 1890's. Guarded only by sharks and ripping currents, the few score political prisoners ever sent to Devil's Island had a relatively easy existence. They were not required to work, but were totally isolated, living in tiny huts beneath the palms.

On St. Joseph Island were the terrible stone pits, roofed only by iron bars, where the most dangerous criminals of France went insane under burning sun and torrential rains. Lack of both sound and light did gruesome work in the "black cells" of neighboring Isle Royale, where men were sent to solitary confinement for months at a time—or to the crashing blade of the guillotine.

French Guiana's notorious "dry guillotine" was the brutal mainland center at St. Laurent. In jungle swamps chain gangs worked waist deep in muck. Malaria struck down men faster than they could be replaced. Reserved for the worst "incorrigibles" was Camp St. Jean on the Maroni River, where today a prospering settlement has been hacked out of the jungle by farmers and craftsmen recruited by the International Refugee Organization.

Death in the Jungle

French Guiana became a prison colony in 1852, when an initial shipload of exiles arrived there, although it was not until 1854 that Napoleon III signed an edict legalizing their deportation. Today the only French possession on the American continent, the territory was the death scene of a tragic expedition before the American Revolution.

Up the Kourou River a French colonizing company sent 12,000 emigrants in 1763-4. Badly equipped, unwisely chosen—for the party included jewelers, dancing masters, and dressmakers but few experienced farmers

UMI

An iron forge, burned by British forces in September, 1777, gave the location its name. Its ruins, beside tiny Valley Creek in the quiet vale to the west of the camp slopes, have been excavated and preserved for visitors to see.

National shrine that Valley Forge is, of top interest and historical importance, it is one of the few such sites not under national control. For a century it was neglected. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania accepted the gift of Valley Forge Park in 1903 after 25 years of work by the Valley Forge Centennial and Memorial Association. The state has since appropriated considerable funds for maintenance and enlargement.

NOTE: Valley Forge may be located on the Society's map of the Northeastern United States.

For further information, see "Shrines of Each Patriot's Devotion," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for January, 1949; "Artists Look at Pennsylvania" (with 16 paintings), July, 1948*; "In the Pennsylvania Dutch Country," July, 1941; and "Penn's Land of Modern Miracles," July, 1935. *(Issues marked with an asterisk are included on a special list of Magazines available to teachers in packets of ten for $1.00; issues unmarked are 50¢ a copy.)*

WIDE WORLD

BOY SCOUTS BREAK OUT THE COLORS AT VALLEY FORGE. THE HUT IS MODELED AFTER THOSE WHICH SHELTERED WASHINGTON'S TROOPS DURING THE CRUEL WINTER OF 1777-78

The following order form may be used (or copied) for requesting the BULLETINS: School Service Department, National Geographic Society, Washington 6, D. C.

Kindly enter ..... Subscriptions to the Geographic School Bulletins, published weekly (30 issues) during the school year. (Subscriptions entered at any date extend to that date the succeeding year.)

Address for sending BULLETINS .....

City ..... State .....

I enclose for each subscription, 25 cents (in United States or its possessions; in Canada, 50 cents in U. S. Funds): Total amount .....

Bulletin No. 4, May 7, 1951

UN Studies Road-Sign Standardization

A HUMBLE, unsung sentinel beside the highways of the earth—the road sign—suddenly has become a world traveler.

In France, Chile, Turkey, India, and Southern Rhodesia, the familiar yellow-and-black curlicues, curves, and angles of American highway markers have sprouted to guide foreign motorists through a series of United Nations safety tests.

At the same time, United States drivers are being taken over short sections of roads in Ohio, New York, Virginia, and Minnesota marked temporarily by the bright-colored, cartoonlike signs of Europe's international highways (illustration, inside cover).

Words Suffice in Single-language United States

A puffing locomotive in a red triangle is the European-style warning of railroad crossings unprotected by gates. Silhouettes of children signify a school or playground ahead. The outline of a careening automobile means "Slow Down—Slippery Road," while a sign that looks like a camel's back clearly says "Bump!"

In the few decades since high-speed travel by automobile began to transform the world, signs have become vital to the safety of millions. The United States, land of a single language, is sown with signs reading "Stop," "Dangerous Curve," or the famous "Stop, Look and Listen."

But in Europe, touring motorists long have been confused and confounded by signs which give obviously important information in strange languages. Other signs list warnings in several languages—and are so complicated they cannot be read without coming to a full stop.

In 1926, realizing the need for a universal "sign language," an international meeting in Paris drew up a code of symbols and pictures which all countries could use. In 1949, these signs became the basis for a new standardization of signs by a United Nations commission.

Camels Go One Way, Automobiles Another

Because most American roads are under state jurisdiction, United States representatives could sign neither the Paris convention nor the recent United Nations protocol. But Uncle Sam has joined other countries in tests to determine how the two systems—American and European—might both be adapted for better world-wide understanding.

Road signs are found today in some of the most historic and remote corners of the earth, as well as guarding the world's busiest intersections. At the crest of the Khyber Pass between Afghanistan and Pakistan, two arrows and sign-language pictures divide traffic. Automobiles go one way. Camels and horses take the other fork, following a centuries-old trading route to India.

At an intersection in Bali, a huge stone idol with totem-pole features stands guard with a road sign, as if to say, "Be careful, or the demons will drive with you."

When the first sign was erected, no one knows. Certainly it was before the dawn of history. Perhaps the oldest road on earth is a sand-dune

—the majority perished. Only about 900 survived to return to France.

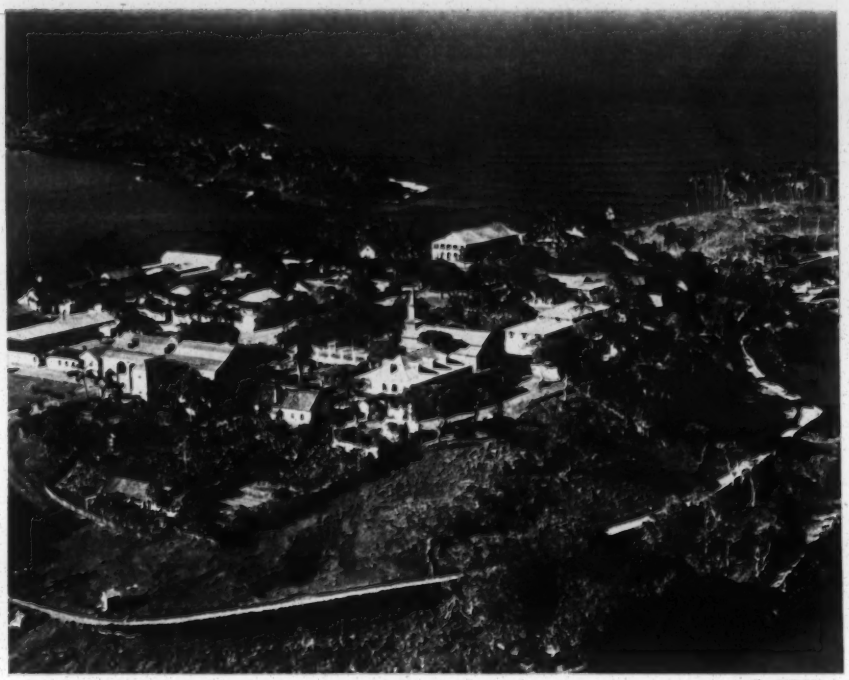
French Guiana's interior, draped in jungle vapor and unexplored mountains between Brazil to the south and Surinam to the west, is still one of the wildest spots left on earth. Descendants of escaped African slaves carry on ancestral rites of fetishism and, some explorers believe, human sacrifice. Head-hunters roam the rain forests.

But there is also gold in the heart of French Guiana, as Sir Walter Raleigh suspected in his search for Eldorado. Small placer operations, many worked by onetime convicts, exploit jungle streams today. Vast stands of rare hardwoods, fertile soil, and untouched mineral deposits contribute to the colony's untapped wealth.

Waiting only for adequate communication facilities—and settlers coming of free choice—French Guiana is opening a new era. The hopeless chant of chained men is now a distant echo of its past.

NOTE: French Guiana may be located on the Society's map of South America.

For additional information, see "Sea Fever," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for February, 1949; "Color Glows in the Guianas, French and Dutch," April, 1943; and "Skypaths Through Latin America," January, 1931.



A. W. STEVENS

ON THESE SUN-BAKED ISLANDS CONDEMNED MEN ONCE SERVED OUT LONG SENTENCES

The small palm-shaded bit of land in the background is Devil's Island, where only a few political prisoners were kept. Hospital, stores, and administration buildings stand on St. Joseph Island in the foreground, just off the coast of French Guiana.

Bulletin No. 5, May 7, 1951

Bekonscot, England, Is a World in Miniature

BEKONSCOT, England's miniature town in Buckinghamshire, will carry on in spite of the county council's demands that it be closed. They consider it a detriment to the residential area of Beaconsfield. Local magistrates have come to the rescue of this mecca of "children from eight to eighty" and ruled that the finger-size residents may continue their village life as they have done for the past two decades.

The decision will interest thousands of visitors who have flocked from all over the world to this Lilliputian town of hip-high houses with inhabitants of appropriate size. It is a reminder that the unique miniature of England's architecture and way of life has survived both wartime devastation and postwar austerity.

Perfect Scale Gives Illusion of Reality

Tiny Bekonscot is a graphic example of planning a community to fit its environment. Covering some two acres of the Callingham estate, it spreads over a small-scale landscape of hill and dale, complete with airport, docks, and an elaborate electric railway system.

Buildings, people, and animals have all been reproduced exactly to scale—an inch to a foot. The result is an illusion of reality so strong that a real bird alighting in a field of miniature farm hands and grazing cattle seems like some giant creature from the Brobdingnag land of *Gulliver's Travels*.

The name Bekonscot is a combination of Beaconsfield and Ascot, the respective names of the home communities of the owner of the model village and of the man who planned the original railroad. The project was started by Roland Callingham of Beaconsfield merely as a decoration for his rock garden.

As it grew in size and fame, Bekonscot was opened to the public each year from April to September. Profits from a small admission fee go to various charities. To date, it is estimated that a million visitors—both children and grownups—have wandered up and down Bekonscot's narrow streets and winding lanes. Some $80,000 has been raised for charity.

Doll Villagers Add Bustling Activity

There are no "Hands Off" signs in Bekonscot. Small fry from the neighborhood as well as from far away delight in handling the models that everywhere add the final lifelike touch to typical activities of an English village.

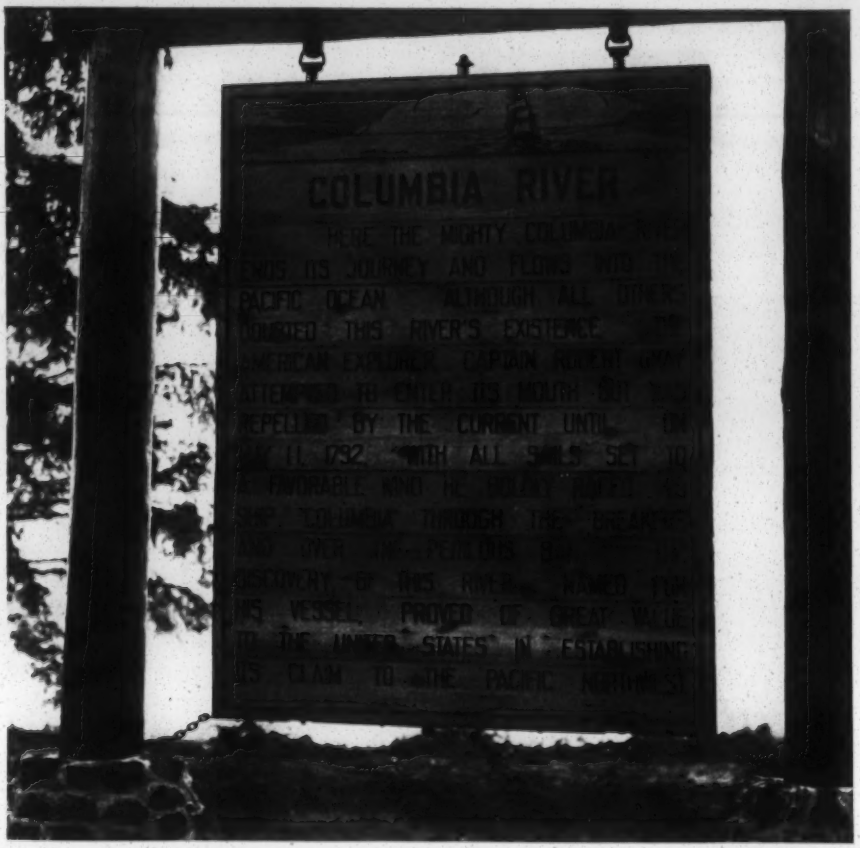
In town, tiny figures are seen entering churches, inns, the post office, courthouse, and school. Shopkeepers display minute wares in infinitesimal shop windows. Householders mow their lawns—real grass, actually cut with scissors. Movie-goers patronize the cinema and teahouse, which share one gray-stone building. Still other Bekonscotians stand by a war memorial—almost a foot high—in a delightful little park.

On the town's outskirts, pink-coated hunters ride to hounds. Hikers stop with their dog to gaze at a rustic mill. Vacationers sail, swim, play

UMI

trail between the Euphrates and the Nile. Signs or symbols in forgotten languages guided traders and armies along this route thousands of years before the Christian era.

Mysterious stone pillars still standing on the wild moors of Brittany may have marked Europe's first roads. As a guide on night marches across the American plains, Pawnees used star charts painted on elkskin. But when wagon trains came to break the Santa Fe and Oregon trails, scouts rode ahead to mark the way with fluttering rags, heaps of stones, or forest blaze marks—the first road signs on the first United States transcontinental highways.



MAYNARD OWEN WILLIAMS

HISTORICAL MARKERS ARE A TYPE OF ROAD SIGN FAMILIAR TO AMERICAN MOTORISTS

NEW NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY 356-PAGE BOOK DEPICTS ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS IN FULL COLOR

The peoples of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome are brought to life in 120 pages of full-color paintings by H. M. Herget in the Society's forthcoming book, EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT TIMES, available about June 15. This durable cloth-bound volume also features articles by noted archeologists on each civilization. Copies for school, library, or home may be obtained at the Society's headquarters. $5.00 in United States and possessions; elsewhere $5.25 in U. S. funds. Postpaid.

tennis and golf, or attend races at a doll-size race-course. Pilots check their planes, and sailors moor their ships to the docks.

No detail is lacking to give Bekonscot authenticity. Dwarf shrubs grow as towering trees to shade carefully tiled roofs, small replicas of half-timbered houses, and homes of brick and stucco. Traffic signs blink their red and green signals, and at the harbor cranes move shipments into warehouses. Bridges suit the toy landscape in size, but in strength they can take the traffic of human feet.

At night lights come on in the streets, flood the airport, and gleam from buildings. Real bells chime and choir music (recorded) echoes from the little stone church with its Norman tower, Celtic cross, and stained-glass windows.

There is even an old castle remodeled into a modern residence; and, as extra proof that Bekonscot moves with the times, there is a group of prefabricated postwar bungalows.

NOTE: Beaconsfield and Ascot may be located on the Society's map of The British Isles.

For further information, see "Bekonscot, England's Toy-Size Town" (with 15 color photographs), in the *National Geographic Magazine* for May, 1937*.

B. ANTHONY STEWART

A CROWD OF GULLIVERS LOOKS DOWN ON LILLIPUTIAN CATTLE, LAKES, AND HOUSES

Bekonscot's perfect proportions—an inch to a foot—create the impression that the sight-seers are giants rather than that the village itself is dwarfed. In the terraced garden pinks resemble sunflowers in size; small stones, as boulders, buttress the placid lake (left).